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Interior Department Supported \$106 Billion in Recreation, Conservation, Water and Renewable Energy Investments, Supporting More than 860,000 Jobs in FY 2015

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today released the *U.S. Department of the Interior's Economic Report for Fiscal Year 2015*. The report highlights that Interior investments in recreation, conservation, water and renewable energy led to \$106 billion in economic output, and supported 862,000 jobs. Interior's activities related to fossil fuel extraction and mining also contributed \$179 billion to the national economy, down from \$241 billion from the prior year due to market forces and commodity price reductions.

The report found that national parks, national wildlife refuges, national monuments and other public lands managed by Interior hosted an estimated 443 million recreational visits in 2015—up from 423 million in 2014—and that these visits alone supported \$45 billion in economic output and about 396,000 jobs nationwide.

“This report sends a strong signal to everyone that the Department of the Interior is a powerful, indispensable economic engine,” Secretary Jewell said. “Our parks and other public lands support outdoor recreation, promote renewable energy and allow us to harness other domestic energy resources, create jobs and promote economic development in communities across the nation.”

Through continued programs and partnerships for youth, the Department provided 36,388 job opportunities in FY 2015, a 120 percent increase over the previous year. In FY 2015, 23,858 youth were employed by Interior and 12,530 were employed by partners.

Secretary Jewell noted that many of Interior's activities—such as scientific research and conservation of parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat—have economic values that are not easily calculated, and are not included in the report's totals.

“Much of the value of our lands and historic sites cannot be expressed in dollars,” said Secretary Jewell. “Beyond their contributions to clean air, clean water and wildlife habitat, many are

priceless treasures that belong to all Americans and help define our cultural heritage for present and future generations.”

Last April, Secretary Jewell announced that the Federal Recreation Council and the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Economic Analysis entered into a cooperative venture to complete a broader economic analysis covering the outdoor recreation sector. That report will document the industry’s value and contributions to the national economy, specifically shedding light on the role public lands and waters play, and will develop a baseline for informing future decision-making, governance and long-term management of public lands and waters.

This report differs from other economic contribution studies in that it is a comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts from DOI activities. This report includes data from reports produced by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the National Park Service (NPS) that focus on impacts from specific agencies and activities.

In total, the report identifies about \$300 billion in economic output and 1.8 million jobs supported through Interior’s activities including: tourism and outdoor recreation at parks, monuments and refuges, water management, energy and mineral development on public lands and waters, wildlife conservation, hunting and fishing, support for American Indian tribal communities and U.S. island territories, as well as scientific research and innovation endeavors.

The Department’s diverse portfolio includes the management of some 500 million acres of public lands, and another 1.7 billion acres offshore on the Outer Continental Shelf. In addition, the Department is the nation’s largest supplier and manager of water in 17 Western states. It oversees cutting-edge scientific research in the areas of geology, hydrology and biology and serves as Trustee for 567 federally-recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

Some highlights from the report include:

Conservation: The economic contributions and employment supported by the Department’s conservation-related activities are difficult to measure separately because conservation is often a component of recreation, ecosystem restoration, water management, and wildlife habitat.

Forage and Grazing: Interior lands provided access to more than 10 million animal unit months of forage in 2015. Forage and grazing activities supported \$2.3 billion in economic output and about 40,000 jobs.

Fossil Fuel Energy: Fossil fuel energy produced from Interior lands in 2015 included 782 million barrels of crude oil, 5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 421 million tons of coal, supporting \$166 billion in economic output and about 777,000 jobs.

Total economic output for FY 2015 is about \$58 billion less than FY 2014, largely due to changes in the price for oil and natural gas. For example, in FY 2014, oil traded for about \$100 per barrel. By FY 2015, market conditions changed significantly, lowering the price per barrel by 50 percent. Similar changes occurred in the natural gas and coal markets, despite increases in production on public lands for oil and coal.

Grants and Payments: Grant and payment programs administered by Interior support activities such as reclamation of abandoned mine lands, historic preservation, habitat conservation, and tribal governance. These activities supported \$9 billion in economic output and 90,000 jobs in 2015.

Non-fuel (Hardrock) Minerals: Hardrock mining on Interior lands produced a wide variety of minerals. For example, an estimated 2.5 million troy ounces of gold from BLM lands in Nevada's hardrock mining activities supported \$13 billion in economic output and over 47,000 jobs.

Recreation: National parks, national wildlife refuges and other lands managed by the Department hosted an estimated 443 million visits, supporting \$45 billion in economic output and about 396,000 jobs.

Renewable Energy: Interior lands and facilities produced 36 million MWh of hydropower. The BLM and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) approved the installation of 492 MW in new solar energy projects on public and tribal lands. Renewable energy activities supported an estimated \$3 billion in economic output and resulting in about 15,000 jobs in 2015.

Restoration: Nearly every Interior bureau engages in some form of restoration, for resources ranging from physical structures to habitat and cultural resources.

- The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Environmental Restoration program activities improve natural resources and reduce risk to public health, safety and general welfare. In FY 2015 OSMRE reclaimed or mitigated the equivalent of 12,339 acres of land on 566 projects.
- The DOI Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program works across bureaus to ensure that responsible parties, not taxpayers, bear the cost of restoring resources injured by oil spills or hazardous substance releases. In FY 2015, this program restored or enhanced 46,606 acres and 149 streams/shoreline miles to achieve habitat conditions to support species conservation.

Scientific Data: Investments in research and development promote economic growth and innovation, ensure American competitiveness in a global marketplace, and are critical to achieving Interior's mission. Investments in Interior's research and development through the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and other agencies will improve U.S. strategic mineral supplies, understanding of ecosystem services, water use and availability, and natural hazard preparedness. Much scientific knowledge is difficult to value and monetize, and may be under provided.

Timber: Over half a billion board feet of timber harvested on BLM and tribal lands supported \$1 billion in economic output and about 4,600 jobs.

Water: The Bureau of Reclamation and the BIA store and deliver water for agricultural, municipal and industrial users, supporting \$48 billion in economic output and 361,000 jobs in 2015.

This year's report is paired with a web-based data visualization tool that lets the user customize the contribution analysis by bureau, activity or state. You can view that site and download the full economic report, with a discussion of the analysis and methodology applied, [here](#).

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